

CT DEP Communications
Lori St. Amand, (860) 424-4100
MA Office of Environmental Affairs
Dale Young, (617) 626-1134
USFWS N.E. Field Office
Veronica Varela, (603) 223-2541
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**Procedural Agreement Clears the Way for State
and Federal Partnership in Restoration of Housatonic River in CT and MA**

State and federal officials announced approval of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the handling of natural resources damages arising from the release of PCBs by the General Electric Company into the Housatonic River environment. The recovery of over \$19.7 million in natural resources damages is provided for under a Consent Decree entered into by General Electric Company, the Federal Government, the State of Connecticut and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The MOA recognizes the common interests of the Natural Resource Trustees in restoring, replacing and enhancing natural resources and establishes the framework for a coordinated handling of cleanup, remediation and restoration activities relating to PCB contamination.

The Natural Resource Trustees are the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The Agreement enables each state to take the lead in developing individual Natural Resource Restoration Plans and to collaborate on joint restoration projects and planning for the River in both states.

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The State of Connecticut and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have each received \$7.75 million to undertake restoration projects to be identified in their respective Natural Resource Restoration Plans. An allocation of \$4.23 million will be shared by all Trustees for use on approved restoration activity in Connecticut and/or Massachusetts.

“This is another important milestone in the lengthy process of restoring the Housatonic River. We have now reached the point where we can identify and evaluate candidate habitats for restoration,” said DEP Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr. “Soon the trustees can decide where the most beneficial investments can be made towards improving this most important natural resource.”

The MOA establishes a Trustee Council and two Sub-councils, one for Connecticut and one for Massachusetts. Each Sub-council will be responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of a Natural Resource Restoration Plan that includes an evaluation of potential restoration activities. State and Federal Trustees will work together to develop State-specific public participation plans that identify the tasks to be undertaken and the process that will be followed. Public informational meetings may also be scheduled at locations in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

“The Trustees are pleased to reach this milestone,” said Dr. Mamie A. Parker, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Northeast. “Now we can begin identifying projects to benefit natural resources.”

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“The Memorandum of Agreement outlines how decisions on restoration projects in each state will be made. We are looking forward to developing a range of projects in close consultation with the communities affected by the site,” said Bob Durand, Trustee and Secretary for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

The Memorandum of Agreement and response to public comments regarding the MOA will be available through the U.S. EPA website for the Housatonic River cleanup – <http://www.epa.gov/region01/ge>.

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